The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor concerning in the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and reports valuable information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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WE PLEDGE—
1 BILLION DOLLARS
IN
WAR SAVINGS BONDS
FOR VICTORY

WHOLE NO. 1711 | WILLIAM GREEN, President | WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 1944 | GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer | VOL. 34, NO. 4

FACING *the* FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

Labor is always forced to take the rap when things go wrong on the home front, but when anything has to be done—when strong hearts and willing hands and generous contributions are needed—just as surely labor is always the first to be called upon to do the job.

In fact, almost invariably labor does not wait to be called—it volunteers well in advance. Three immediate examples are at hand.

Right now the entire nation is trying to help put the Fourth War Loan Drive over the top. Every patriotic American citizen is buying War Bonds to the limit to back the final attack on the enemy which we hope and pray will lead to victory this year. What we would like to point out is that the American Federation of Labor enlisted in this drive a week before it was opened. President William Green launched labor's participation at a gathering of labor leaders in Indianapolis, where he delivered an address that was broadcast throughout the nation. As a result of labor's early start, the Treasury Department is confident that American workers will make an even better showing this time than in the Third War Loan Drive when they purchased more extra bonds than any other group in our population.

Aiding the March of Dimes

Another example of labor's all-out support of every worthy home front endeavor is the current March of Dimes drive being conducted by the National Foundation For Infantile Paralysis. For many years labor has rendered yeoman service in the fight against this dread disease. This year finds labor's interest in helping to raise funds to suppress an infantile paralysis epidemic even greater than usual, because wartime conditions in many war production centers constitute a potential health menace to workers and their children.

And this year, as before, we find that President Green is serving as chairman of the Foundation's Labor Division and we find all AFL unions and their members contributing generously to the cause which is so close to our Commander-in-Chief's heart. In former years the Labor Contributory Workers Union used to present a birthday cake to President Roosevelt, festooned not only with delectable icing, but also with substantial checks from AFL organizations. This year, because of wartime food shortages, the cake is probably out, but the checks will be forthcoming in greater number than usual. We feel confident of that after hearing President Green's fervent appeal over the radio to all of the nation's workers to dig down for the dimes and dollars that help to keep infantile paralysis in check.

The Red Cross In March

While we're on the subject of fund-raising campaigns, let's not forget about the American Red Cross. Next March the Red Cross will launch its annual drive and it is going to need a lot more money this year than ever before because of the heavy war responsibilities and services it is rendering to members of our armed services and victims of suffering everywhere. The American Federation of Labor did not wait till March to get busy in behalf of the Red Cross. The AFL's Executive Council swung into action on Jan. 18 with the adoption of a resolution calling upon all central bodies and affiliated organizations to get set in advance to raise as much money as possible for the Red Cross.

We've mentioned these three specific matters, not because they are isolated cases but because they have all happened within a few days of the writing of this piece. It would take volumes to tell of all the important war services rendered by labor organizations above Pearl Harbor.

Labor doesn't claim special credit for those services. It is not looking for praise when it does what it considers its duty. Patriotism is its own reward. Anything to help the workers cash in fully on the war or end it quickly as possible and prevent unnecessary bloodshed and suffering they are anxious to do for that very reason. No other motive is more moving or more compelling.

Labor can get along without pats on the back. It can get along even better without stabs in the back. But it's going to get along, regardless, and it's going to help carry along America to victory in this war, come what may.

AFL Council Condemns Scheme To Draft Labor; Asks Federal Ballot Law For Overseas Forces

Council Denounces Labor Draft

Miami, Fla.—Urgent telegrams were sent to all members of Congress by AFL President William Green containing the text of a strongly-worded resolution, unanimously adopted by the Executive Council, which condemned the proposal for a National Service Act as "unnecessary and unwise."

The council charged that such a law, which would introduce compulsory labor in America for the first time, was suggested by President Roosevelt on the "mistaken promise" that it would prevent strikes.

"No man-made law will prevent strikes so long as the unjust conditions which provoke strikes are allowed to remain in force," the council declared. "The way to end strikes is to give workers fair play."

The text of the resolution follows:

"The American Federation of Labor has consistently supported every sound measure designed to win the war in the shortest possible time. Unlike other groups, whose opposition to Nazism and Fascism is of recent and belated origin, the American Federation of Labor from the very beginning vigorously and uncompromisingly denounced totalitarian dictatorship and recognized its basic hostility to democracy. Years before Pearl Harbor and Japanese aggression was declared long before Pearl Harbor and it has been carried on unremittingly ever since.

"Because speedy victory is its No. 1 objective, the American Federation of Labor has voluntarily submitted to various war-time controls and considerable Government representation on vital matters normally left to the sphere of economic determination and collective bargaining—such as terms of employment, working conditions and wages.

"The one thing the American Federation of Labor has not surrendered and will not surrender is the basic freedom of American workers. Fundamentally, this is a war between free men and slavery, a war of free workers against slave workers. We believe that is freedom there is strength. The amazing speed with which free American workers have won the battle of war production against the enemy within two years upholds the truth of that principle.

"It is now proposed to substitute compulsory labor for our traditional system of free labor by the enactment of a National Service law.

"The Executive Council has given careful consideration to this proposal. We are convinced that it is based on a mistaken premise—the premise that a National Service Act, which would introduce compulsory labor in America for the first time in history, would prevent strikes.

"The experience of other countries notably Great Britain—proves that a National Service Law does not prevent strikes. There have been more strikes proportionately in Great Britain in the past two years than in the United States. The laws of nature are superior to the laws of man. It is a law of nature that human beings will rebel against injustice. No man-made law will prevent strikes so long as the unjust conditions which provoke strikes are allowed to remain in force. The way to end strikes is to give workers fair play.

"The record shows that the great majority of American workers has remained steadfastly on the job since Pearl Harbor. Are we to punish them and jeopardize the splendid production achievements they have made just because a small minority has proved less dependable?

"Only two months ago, the leading representatives of American industry, agriculture and labor joined in a unanimous declaration that the nation's manpower problems can best be solved by voluntary cooperation and that a National Service Act would only obstruct the war production program. Can we afford to reject this practical counsel and venture into dangerous fields of experimentation at this critical moment in the war effort?

"The Executive Council firmly believes that the war production program is progressing far better than anyone could have dared to hope two years ago and should not be upset by radical innovations at this late date.

"We commend the officers and members of the American Federation of Labor for promptly and vigorously expressing opposition to the proposal for a National Service Act.

"The Executive Council appeals to Congress to defeat this unnecessary and unwise legislative proposal."

AFL URGES REGULATION OF WAR PRISONERS JOBS

Miami, Fla.—Warning against the employment of prisoners of war in competition with free American workers on jobs where they might be able to sabotage the war effort, the AFL Executive Council called upon the Government to deal with this problem promptly.

AFL President William Green told press conference that many complaints have been received from unions against the "indiscriminate employment" of such prisoners. He gave as specific examples the assignment of prisoners to log cutting and to lumbering in the Wisconsin forests. The text of the council statement follows:

"The Executive Council is deeply concerned over the almost indiscriminate employment of prisoners of war in competition with free American workers.

"This practice is dangerous and is calculated to arouse deep resentment among American workers. It cannot be justified on the grounds of manpower shortages or for any other reason.

"The Executive Council feels that a clear-cut program should be worked out for the employment of prisoners of war on useful projects where there could be no threat of sabotage and no less dependable labor would be displaced.

"The way we deal with prisoners of war may affect the treatment of our own boys who are captured by the enemy. It is therefore essential that our policies be humane as well as practical. The Geneva Convention prohibits the employment of prisoners of war for production or transportation of arms or munitions of any kind or for transporting materials intended for combat units. Their employment in degrading, unhealthful, or hazardous work is also forbidden. It is therefore incumbent upon the Government to devise and follow a definite program which will avoid retaliation by the enemy—nor arouse friction with free American workers."

IBANEZ ASKS FOR UNITY OF LABOR IN AMERICAS

Miami, Fla.—A strong plea for close cooperation of the trade union movements of the Western Hemisphere in the postwar period to prevent exploitation of workers was presented to the AFL Executive Council meeting by Bernardo Ibanez, head of the Chilean Confederation of Workers.

"You represent the oldest, most determined and most vigorous labor organization in the Western Hemisphere," Senor Ibanez told the AFL leaders. "You are also the most powerful nucleus for organization of labor unions in the Americas.

"For this very reason, you have the greatest responsibility in this hour which is facing America and the world.

"We should all fight together to avoid the exploitation and division of man and the enslavement of millions and millions of workers for the benefit of a few corporate enterprises."

LABOR'S POSTWAR ROLE OUTLINED BY COUNCIL

Miami, Fla.—Full labor representation at the peace conferences and on all Government agencies dealing with labor's postwar problems was demanded by the AFL Executive Council.

The council also called upon all affiliated central bodies to obtain representation on all Government agencies created to deal with postwar re-employment and public works.

Need for the launching of a gigantic postwar housing program to provide 15 million new homes and to afford millions of jobs for building trades workers was emphasized by the council. It was pointed out that unemployment in the construction industry is already severe and is bound to grow progressively worse as the War Production Board is refused to make materials available for new construction this year.

AFL UNION CERTIFIED

Washington, D. C.—The National Labor Relations Board announced certification of the Federal Labor Union 22536, American Federation of Labor, as bargaining agent for between forty-five and fifty militarized plant guard fire guards at the Berlin plant, N. J., plant of the Aluminum Company of America. The union had won an election, 42 to 1, the NLRB said.

SHIPBUILDING PLANT ELECTS AFL UNION

Washington, D. C.—AFL President William Green received a report from Director James F. McSweeney, Cleveland, Ohio, that in an election at the plant of the American Shipbuilding Company to choose a collective bargaining representative a majority of the ballots were cast for AFL Federal Labor Union No. 23986.

Miami Meeting Opens Way For Reaffiliation of United Mine Workers; Continues Fight Against State Anti-Labor Laws

Miami, Fla.—Hitting hard on two major domestic issues, the AFL Executive Council rejected proposals for a national war labor draft and called upon Congress to make it possible for every member of the armed forces serving overseas to vote in the coming national elections.

Other outstanding actions by the Council as its mid-winter session moved into the second week included:

1—It proposed that the United Mine Workers Union could return to the Federation with the same jurisdiction it enjoyed before it left and authorized a committee to take up with the union the settlement of jurisdictional conflicts precedent to re-affiliation.

2—After receiving a report from Joseph A. Padway, counsel for the AFL, on the status of anti-labor state legislation, the Council directed him to continue the successful fight to challenge the validity of these measures in the courts.

3—The Council received with interest and approbation a recommendation by President John F. Frey of the Metal Trade Department that all federal agencies dealing with labor be centralized in the Labor Department to the end that clear-cut and consistent labor policies be formulated and followed. Frey charged that at present labor unions are required to deal with twenty-five separate agencies whose policies are frequently contradictory.

Still to be considered by the Council was the invitation from the British Trades Union Congress to attend a so-called world labor congress in London next June as well as a series of preliminary reports from the postwar committee, headed by Vice President Matthew Woll.

In its statement on the proposal for a National Service Act, the Executive Council left no room for doubt as to its unanimous opinion. It denounced such legislation as unwise and unnecessary and stated flatly that such a law would not prevent strikes. The only way to prevent strikes, the Council declared, is to remove the unjust conditions which provoke workers to strike and give them fair play in both the war and the peace.

Taking up the soldier vote question, the Council made it plain that a clear and unequivocal federal statute is needed to enable members of the armed forces serving overseas to exercise their right to vote in the 1944 national elections. State laws which hinder the voting privileges of soldiers and sailors overseas should be superseded, the Executive Council said.

Almost a full day's session was devoted to the re-consideration of the application of the United Mine Workers Union for re-affiliation. The Council first considered a report from its committee which met a month ago in Washington with a UMW committee and also considered a letter received from John L. Lewis, UMW president.

After considerable discussion, the following decision was announced:

"The Council proposes that the United Mine Workers return with the jurisdiction they had when they left the American Federation of Labor. The Council instructs its committee to meet again with a committee representing the United Mine Workers of America for the purpose of clarifying all questions that have not been settled."

Among these questions are the jurisdictional conflicts existing between District 50 of the UMW and its key members and between the broad jurisdictional clash between the UMW as a whole and the Progressive Mine Workers Union of America.

In response to questions at a press conference, AFL President William Green said that, in his opinion, "progress" had been made in the protracted negotiations with the UMW.

Give Every Soldier Right To Vote, Executive Council Asks Congress

Miami, Fla.—Immediate adoption by Congress of a "simplified and uniform soldier vote law" which would permit every member of the armed forces overseas to vote in the coming national elections was demanded by the AFL Executive Council. The text of the resolution, which was sent to all members of Congress, follows:

"The right to vote is the most precious possession of any citizen in a democracy. Only by exercise of this right to vote can government of the people, by the people and for the people be assured and maintained.

"The laws which govern the right to vote are, for the most part, designed to protect the citizens of each State in a free exercise of the ballot. But these same laws, in the case of soldiers overseas, have the effect to deprive millions of American citizens of the opportunity to vote in the national elections this fall.

"The fact that these citizens are members of the nation's armed forces, serving overseas and risking their lives against the enemy, makes it the more incumbent upon Congress to remove any artificial restrictions upon the exercise of their right to vote.

"The Executive Council is opposed to the soldier vote measure as passed by the House because it is indefensibly restrictive and limited in its application. This measure will not give every soldier overseas the chance to vote which is his right.

"For this reason the only practical thing to do is for Congress to adopt a simplified and uniform soldier vote law which will assure to each and every person in our armed forces overseas a free exercise of his right as a citizen to vote in the coming national elections.

"The Executive Council strongly urges Congress to take such action without delay."

Building Trades Rap U. S. Agencies For Flouting of Stabilization Accord

Washington, D. C.—The Building and Construction Trades Department, in a letter to Congressional leaders, filed a vigorous protest against governmental violation of the building trades stabilization agreement of 1941 and circumvention of the Davis-Bacon Act.

The letter, signed by Acting President Richard J. Gray and Secretary-Treasurer Herbert Rivers, made clear that the Building and Construction Trades Department was as anxious as always to "do everything possible" to win the war. The statement, however, pointed out, however, that the flouting of the stabilization accord and the Davis-Bacon Act was causing "aggravation and discontent" among building trades workers.

The statement was prompted by a statement adopted by the Department's Executive Council at its recent meeting at Miami. The statement declared the administrative branches of the government "are not living up to the spirit" in carrying out the provisions of the stabilization agreement, particularly Paragraph 8, under which a board of review was established whose findings were to have been binding on all parties to the pact.

Citing examples of the failure of government agencies to abide by decisions of the board of review, the statement said:

"Recognizing that any agreement to be worthwhile must be observed by all parties thereto, it is our opinion that neither until the agencies of the U. S. Government, parties to this agreement, signify their willingness to abide by and adhere to its provisions that we or labor feel that we should not be obligated to abide by the terms of this agreement."

The statement called attention to the fact that labor has faithfully adhered to the provisions of the agreement ever since its signing. This has been stated by Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell in testimony before the House Military Affairs Committee.

Plight of the White Collar Workers Demands Action, Labor Leaders Say

Washington, D. C.—On the eve of the opening of an inquiry by the Senate Committee on Education and Labor into the wartime problems of white collar workers, the American Federation of Labor presented to that labor authorities on the subject on its "Labor for Victory" broadcast January 23.

The speakers were Boris Shishkin, AFL economist; James B. Burns, president of the American Federation of Government Employees; Joseph S. George, president of the National Federation of Post Office Clerks, and William F. McHale, vice president of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

"We have heard a great deal in recent weeks from persons who have not heretofore shown any considerable interest in the welfare of the white collar man, about the plight of the white collar worker," said Mr. Burns.

"These weepers of crocodile tears—for that seems to be a fair description of most of this group—emphasize the vast number of white collar workers and deplore their inability to keep up the pace of other workers, because they are unorganized. In the first place, a great many white collar workers are organized, and that number is steadily growing. In the second place, those who are now so solicitous for the welfare of the white collar man don't suggest the obvious remedy, that he organize. Instead they warn him against those who have had the foresight to organize for the improvement of their lot."

Mr. Burns and the other speakers on the broadcast emphasize that white collar workers are today faced with a crisis resulting from the fact that their purchasing power, instead of that of other groups in the population, is declining. They cited the unfairness of making any one group bear a disproportionate burden in fighting the war.

Mr. George said that rising prices have spelled wage cuts for postal workers as well as other workers, even in the fixed income group. The cost-of-living bonus established by Congress last year represented a partial adjustment, he said, but further adjustments are necessary now in order to maintain the purchasing power essential for decent standards.

"The Department of Labor index seems reassuring when we read about it in the newspapers," Mr. George declared, "but it is hard to convince the postwife that prices have not gone far beyond the figure presented by the Government."

Mr. McHale focused attention on the fact that postal employes do not receive overtime and a bonus for night work.

"All work performed in excess of 40 hours is compensated at straight time pay," he said. "It is time, Congress should now enact legislation that will provide the real wages of American workers the same rights enjoyed by wage-earners in private industry."

Mr. Shishkin made it clear that white collar unionism is not confined to any one group, and that the organized white collar workers, he said, are an important part of the labor movement and in the AFL "they stand and work shoulder to shoulder with their fellow unionists."

He urged those white collar workers who are still unorganized to join unions "free from domination and effective protection * * * and for better conditions of work and pay in the present wartime goal—speedier victory."

George J. Richardson, secretary-treasurer of the Federal Employes Association of Fire Fighters, who was one of the first to testify on the Senate Committee's hearing opened, told of the "precarious plight" of municipal fire fighters and the efforts to maintain their living standards. He said pay has remained "practically static" and that promotion, even when granted, they have not been sufficient to meet the higher cost of living.

"The fire fighters who have remained loyal to their job are finding it extremely difficult to maintain their existence." Mr. Richardson said.

He pointed out that city fire departments are operating with from 10 to 18 per cent less personnel than in 1941, and are finding it difficult to secure replacements because entrance pay is "so low man will not accept the positions."

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AFL Attacks State Anti-Labor Laws; Appeals To Supreme Court Planned

Miami, Fla.—The basis upon which State labor restrictive laws will be attacked in the United States Supreme Court was discussed here by Joseph A. Padway, general counsel to the American Federation of Labor.

Appearing before the Executive Council, Mr. Padway pointed out that lawsuits attacking the constitutionality of such legislation have been begun in State Supreme Courts by the AFL in Kansas, Colorado, Texas, Florida, Alabama, Idaho and South Dakota. The Executive Council told the Executive Council that the suits take the form of an application for an injunction against enforcement of the laws and a request for a declaratory judgment.

Some of the laws being fought by the labor organizations provide for compulsory registration of union officials, submission of financial and other data and the licensing of unions and union officers.

Mr. Padway said the laws which seek to license labor unions and place representatives constitute an unlawful "previous general restraint" upon the exercise by working people of the rights freely granted by the Bill of Rights, namely, the rights of assembly, speech, press and petition.

He argued that the application of the licensing and registration provisions of the State acts to labor unions, as distinguished from all other types of unincorporated associations, such as chambers of commerce and manufacturers' associations, constitutes a discriminatory denial of equal protection of the laws in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Such legislation, Mr. Padway insisted, was not predicated upon any existing abusive conditions and interfered with the traditional, reasonable practices of labor organizations in the conduct of their internal affairs under their constitution and by-laws.

Some of the laws affecting peaceful striking and picketing, according to Mr. Padway, constituted a denial of freedom of assembly and speech guaranteed under the first amendment and the imposition of a condition of "involuntary servitude" prohibited under the Thirteenth Amendment.

New Red Cross Drive Endorsed

Miami, Fla.—All-out support to the new Red Cross for funds in March was pledged by the AFL Executive Council in the following resolution:

"The American Red Cross will again appeal to the American people in March for funds with which to carry on its vital wartime service to our men in the armed forces and to the many victims of war. In addition, it must continue its many other varied services, including disaster relief, and training of civilians in protection of the home front.

"Carrying the compassion of the American people to our men in all parts of the world, the Red Cross deserves the support of every member of the American Federation of Labor along with all other American citizens. Labor has contributed generously to the Red Cross in the past but we are now confronted with the fact that as the end of the war and the victory drive of the United Nations becomes intensified in the months ahead,

"The Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor gives full endorsement to the 1944 Red Cross War Fund Campaign. Local and state bodies will, we are confident, give their organized support in cooperation with United Nations Relief of the Labor League for Human Rights.

"We urge every member to weigh the value of plasma ready on the battlefield; the comfort and recreation provided through Red Cross overseas service clubs; the aid to servicemen in family emergency, large or small; the hope and comfort given by the Red Cross to the helpless victims of war—and respond to the Red Cross War Fund appeal with the greatest possible generosity."

OWENS-ILLINOIS WORKERS CHOOSE BOTTLE BLOWERS

Washington, D. C.—President James Maloney of the Glass Bottle Blowers Association of the United States and Canada reported to AFL President William Green that the Bottle Blowers Association won a large majority of the votes for collective bargaining representative at the election held at the plant of the Owens-Illinois Glass Company at Alton, Ill. The AFL affiliate received 1033 votes against 463 for District 50 of the United Mine Workers.

TEACHERS UNION BEGINS TEXAS ORGANIZING DRIVE

San Antonio, Tex.—A drive to organize the teachers of elementary and high schools in Texas has been started by the American Federation of Teachers (AFL).

Local 789 has already been formed, William B. Arnold, spokesman for Local 789, said that organization of teachers' unions in other Texas cities is under way.

AFL GIVEN BIG MAJORITY BY RUBBER PLANT GUARDS

Washington, D. C.—The National Labor Relations Board certified the American Federation of Labor as the exclusive representative for collective bargaining of all guards and fire force employes at the Institute, W. Va., plant of the United States Rubber Company following an election in which 84 votes were for the AFL, and 5 against.